

## CLAIMS

1. A method operative at a client player, comprising the steps of:
  - initiating a query to a first level nameserver having a map of Internet traffic conditions, the query including an identification of the client player;
  - 5 receiving a response from the first level nameserver based in part on the client player identification, wherein the response comprises a set of one or more tokens, each token including data that the client player can pass back to a second level nameserver to obtain data identifying a set of one or more servers from which the client player may obtain a media stream;
  - 10 initiating a query to the second level nameserver;
  - 15 in response to the query to the second level nameserver, receiving data identifying a set of one or more servers from which the client player may obtain the media stream;
  - selecting a best server from the set of one or more servers;
  - receiving the media stream from the selected best server; and
  - rendering the media stream.
- 15 2. The method as described in Claim 1 wherein the first level nameserver is a DNS SRV server and the query is a DNS SRV lookup.
- 20 3. The method as described in Claim 1 wherein the selecting step includes the steps:
  - initiating a query to each of the set of one or more servers to obtain data about the server's capabilities; and
  - timing a response from each of the set of one or more servers; and
  - determining which of the set of one or more servers provides a fastest response.
- 25 4. The method as described in Claim 3 wherein the query is an RTSP OPTIONS command.
- 30 5. The method as described in Claim 3 further including the step of transmitting given data to the selected best server.

6. The method as described in Claim 5 wherein the given data includes at least some of the data generated as a result of the query to each of the set of one or more servers.

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14. The method as described in Claim 1 further including the steps of:  
5 repeating the query to the first level nameserver to obtain at least one token;  
determining whether the selected best server is providing acceptable service; and  
if the selected best server is not providing acceptable service, using the token to identify  
an alternative server; and  
obtaining additional portions of the media stream from the alternative server.

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8. The method as described in Claim 7 wherein the determining step identifies whether the media stream is being thinned by a given amount.

9. A client-side method operative at a streaming media player, comprising the steps of:

- (a) initiating a DNS SRV query to a first level nameserver having a map of Internet traffic conditions, the query including an identification of the client player;
- 5 (b) receiving a response from the first level nameserver based in part on the client player identification, wherein the response comprises a set of one or more tokens, each token including data that the client player can pass back to a second level nameserver to obtain data identifying a set of one or more servers from which the client player may obtain a media stream;
- (c) initiating a DNS query to the second level nameserver;
- 10 (d) in response to the query to the second level nameserver, receiving data identifying a set of one or more servers from which the client player may obtain the media stream;
- (e) selecting a first server from the set of one or more servers;
- (f) receiving the media stream from the first server;
- 15 (g) rendering the media stream;
- (h) periodically, as the media stream is being rendered, repeating the DNS SRV query to obtain at least one additional token;
- (i) determining whether the first server is providing acceptable service;
- (j) if the first server is not providing acceptable service, using the additional token to
- 20 identify a second server; and
- (k) receiving additional portion of the media stream from the second server.

10. The method as described in Claim 9 wherein the selecting step (e) includes the steps:

- 25 initiating a query to each of the set of one or more servers to obtain data about the server's capabilities; and
- timing a response from each of the set of one or more servers; and
- determining which of the set of one or more servers provides a fastest response.

30 11. The method as described in Claim 10 further including the step of transmitting

given data to the first server.

12. The method as described in Claim 11 wherein the given data includes at least some of the data generated as a result of the query to each of the set of one or more servers.

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13. The method as described in Claim 8 wherein the streaming media player conforms to a given proprietary format.

## 14. A client media player, comprising:

code that initiates a query to a first level nameserver having a map of Internet traffic conditions to obtain at least one token, the token including a data string that the client player can pass back to a second level nameserver to obtain data identifying a set of one or more servers

5 from which the client player may obtain a media stream;

code responsive to receipt of a token for initiating a query to the second level nameserver to obtain data identifying a set of one or more servers;

code for determining a first server from the set of one or more servers;

code for publishing given data generated as a result of the determination; and

10 code for selectively switching from the first server to a second server as a result of a subsequent query to the first level nameserver as a media stream received from the first server is being rendered by the client media player.

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